



24 NOV 96

ROBINSON
HARRIS
SPOUSE
VON GRAWBAGGER

STARMAN



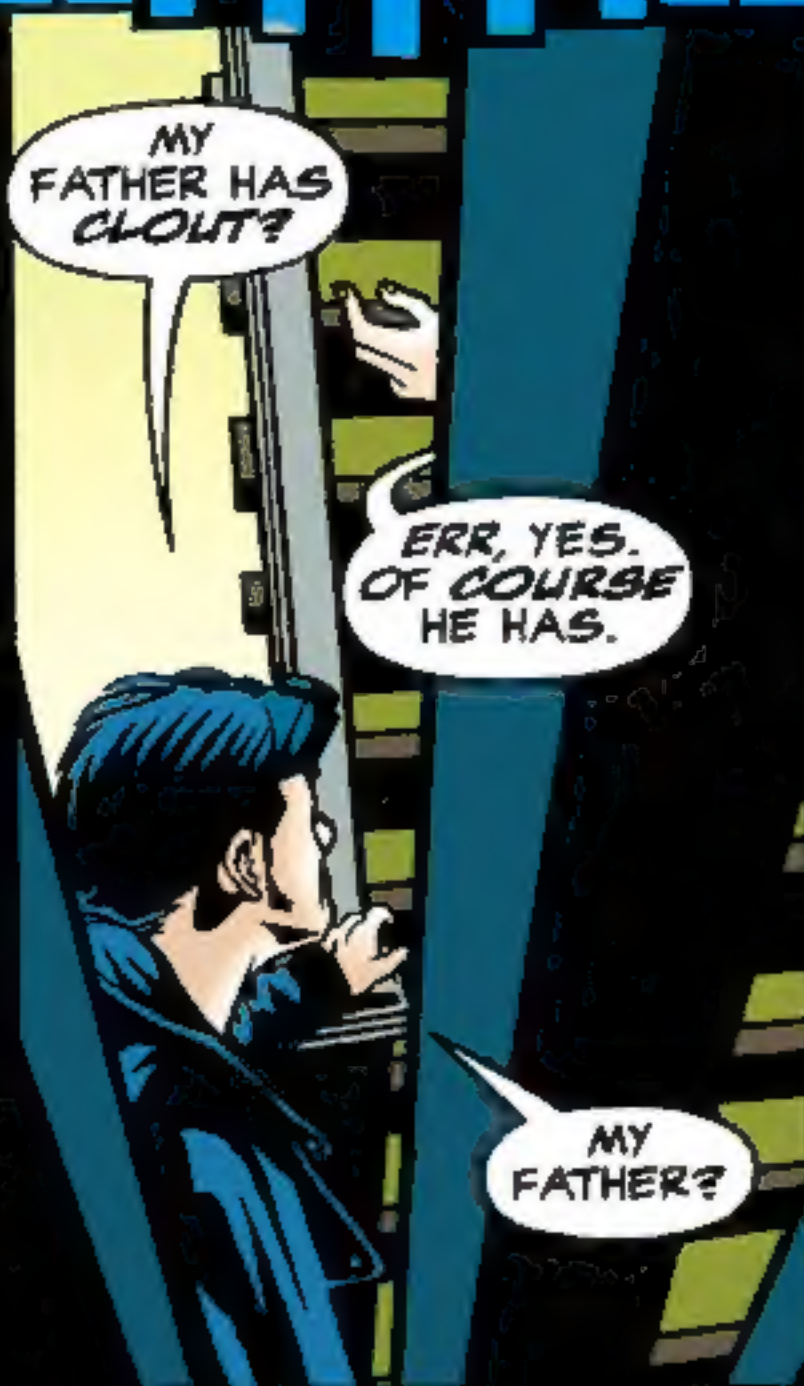
DEMON QUEST PART ONE OF THREE





THANKS FOR ALLOWING THIS.

YOUR FATHER PHONED AHEAD HIS WORD HAS A LOT OF CLOUT IN THIS CITY. I WAS MORE THAN HAPPY TO OBLIGE HIM.



MY FATHER HAS CLOUT?

ERR, YES. OF COURSE HE HAS.

MY FATHER?



MR. KNIGHT, YOUR FATHER IS THE MOST FAMOUS CITIZEN OF OPAL. HIS WORD HAS MORE PULL THAN THE MAYOR'S.

NO.



MAYORS WIN AND LOSE ELECTIONS. THEY COME AND GO.

TED KNIGHT, STARMAN, HAS BEEN WITH US FOR DECADES. HE'S DONE MORE FOR THE CITY, TOO, THAN ANY BUREAU-CRAT.

I...I NEVER THOUGHT OF MY FATHER THAT WAY.



ANYWAY, HERE WE ARE. WE HAVE A GUARD OUTSIDE IF THERE ARE PROBLEMS, THOUGH I DON'T EXPECT ANY.

RIGHT.



HE APPEARED TO HAVE SOME OF HIS FACILITIES THIS MORNING. YOU'RE LUCKY. THEY'LL LEAVE HIM AS SUDDENLY. THEN NO ONE CAN COMMUNICATE WITH HIM.



WILL HE RECOGNIZE ME?

NO.

GOOD.



KNOCK ON THE DOOR WHEN YOU'RE DONE.

I WILL. THANKS AGAIN.



sand and stars

hell and back

AN EPILOGUE

A PROLOGUE

JAMES ROBINSON - writer
TONY HARRIS - pencils, pgs 1-9, 11, 13, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22
CHRIS SPROUSE - pencils pgs 10, 12, 14, 15, 18, 20
WADE VON GRAWBADGER - inks pgs 1-4, 9-22
RAY SNYDER - inks pgs 5-8
GREGORY WRIGHT - colors
OAKLEY / N.J.Q - letterers
CHUCK KIM - assistant editor
ARCHIE GOODWIN - editor



JACK KNIGHT
created by
JAMES ROBINSON &
TONY HARRIS

ERR...

...HELLO,
FATHER.
IT'S ME...

...YOUR
SON.







REALLY? WELL, I SUPPOSE THAT'S SOMETHING TO BE PROUD OF.



SHE LOVES YOU, DAD. LOVES YOU ENOUGH TO CHANGE HER ENTIRE BEING. SHE BECAME THE WOMAN YOU WOULD HAVE WANTED HER TO BE. THAT'S MORE THAN I EVER DID. THAT'S SURE MORE THAN THAT IDIOT, JACK KNIGHT, EVER DID FOR HIS FATHER.



AND SHE'S OUT THERE STILL?

YES. DOING VILLAINY IN YOUR NAME.

WELL...



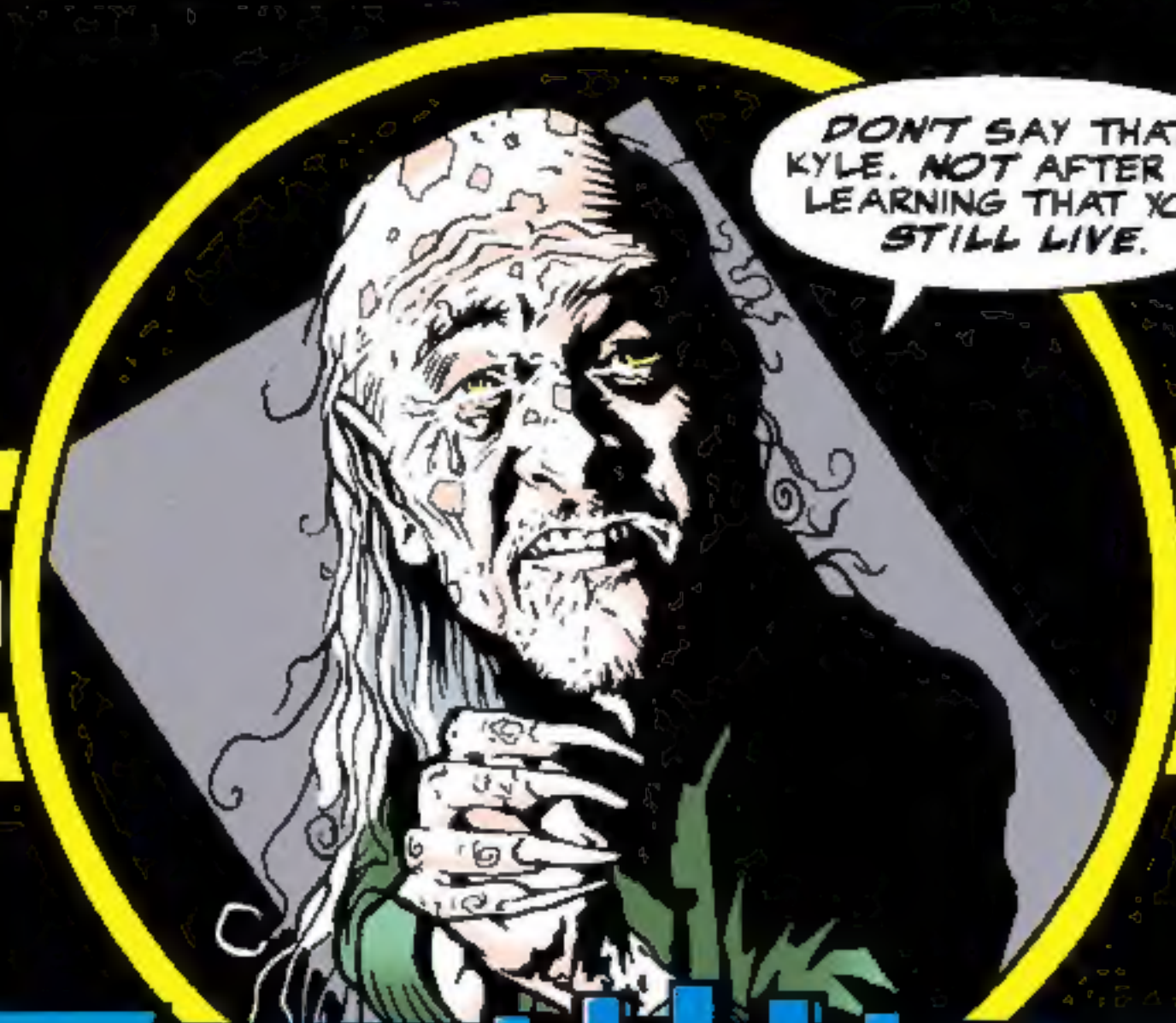
...PERHAPS I DID MISJUDGE THE GIRL.

ALL RIGHT. IF SHE WOULD BE THE MIST, THEN SO SHE SHALL.



AND WHAT OF YOU?

I'M GOING AWAY, DAD. YOU MAY NOT SEE ME AGAIN.



DON'T SAY THAT, KYLE. NOT AFTER MY LEARNING THAT YOU STILL LIVE.

I FEEL I GOTTA TRAVEL, FATHER. THE NEED TO DO EVIL IN YOUR NAME... I FEEL THE CRAVING TO STRIKE FURTHER AFIELD WITH IT. I MUST GO.

I HAVE TO REMAIN ONE JUMP AHEAD OF THE AUTHORITIES, FOR THEY CONSTANTLY HUNT ME.

HANAAHEHE. AS ANY VILLAIN WORTH HIS COTTON SOCKS SHOULD.

BUT HERE, I BROUGHT YOU SOMETHING.

YOUR MEDAL. THAT YOU WON AND THEN LOST THOSE MANY YEARS AGO. I KILLED SANDMAN FOR IT. I CUT HIM UP AND HUNG HIS INSIDES FROM THE CEILING.

MY MEDAL! MY MEDAL! I DIDN'T THINK I'D EVER SEE IT AGAIN.

OH KYLE, THANK YOU! WHAT A GOOD BOY YOU ARE. WHAT A FINE BOY.

DID I TELL YOU HOW I WON THIS?

FOR YOU, FATHER.

ERR, YES, DAD. MANY TIMES, BUT TELL ME AGAIN. YOU KNOW HOW I LOVE TO HEAR THE TALE.

IT WAS DURING THE GREAT WAR. I WAS A CAPTAIN IN THE CANADIAN ARMY WE'D JUST LOST OUR TRENCH TO THE ENEMY'S CHARGE. WE'D PULLED BACK TO ONE IN THE REAR.

WE KNEW THE ENEMY WAS MOUNTING ANOTHER PUSH, AND WE HAD FEW MEN TO COUNTER IT.

THEN I LOOKED OVER THE TOP AND SAW WOUNDED MEN. MY MEN. CLOSE TO THE GERMAN TRENCH. THEY WERE BEING BAYONETED. KILLED WHERE THEY LAY.

IT WAS DARK, BUT ONCE IN A WHILE, A FLARE OFF AWAY WOULD KIND OF HALF-LIGHT THE HELLISH SCENE. AND THERE'S NOTHING LIKE THE SOUND OF MEN SCREAMING IN THE NIGHT. FOR HOURS THIS WENT ON. THE SCREAMS. MEN BEGGING FOR MERCY AND NOT GETTING IT.

I COULDN'T HELP BUT HEAR. I REMEMBER WEeping AT ONE POINT. AND THEN. THEN...

THEY SAW ME COMING, OF COURSE. THE HUNS FIRED AT ME. BUT NOT ONE HIT. IT WAS LIKE GOD OR DEVIL BLESSED ME THAT DAY. AND PUT SPEED IN MY HEELS AND MADE MY AIM TRUE.

I KILLED ALL THE GERMANS WHO WERE OUT OF THEIR TRENCH.

AND THEN I JUMPED INTO THE GERMAN TRENCH AND CONTINUED FIGHTING.

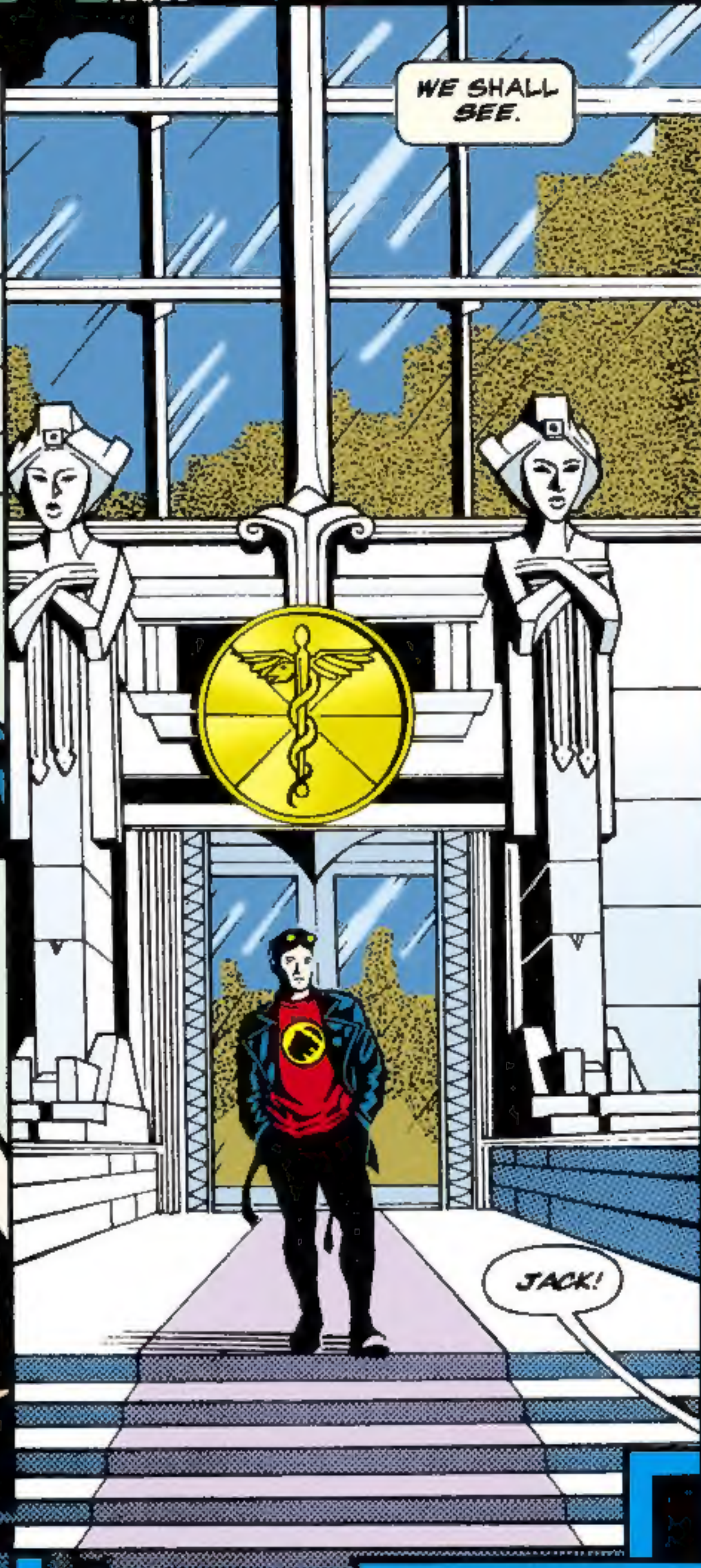
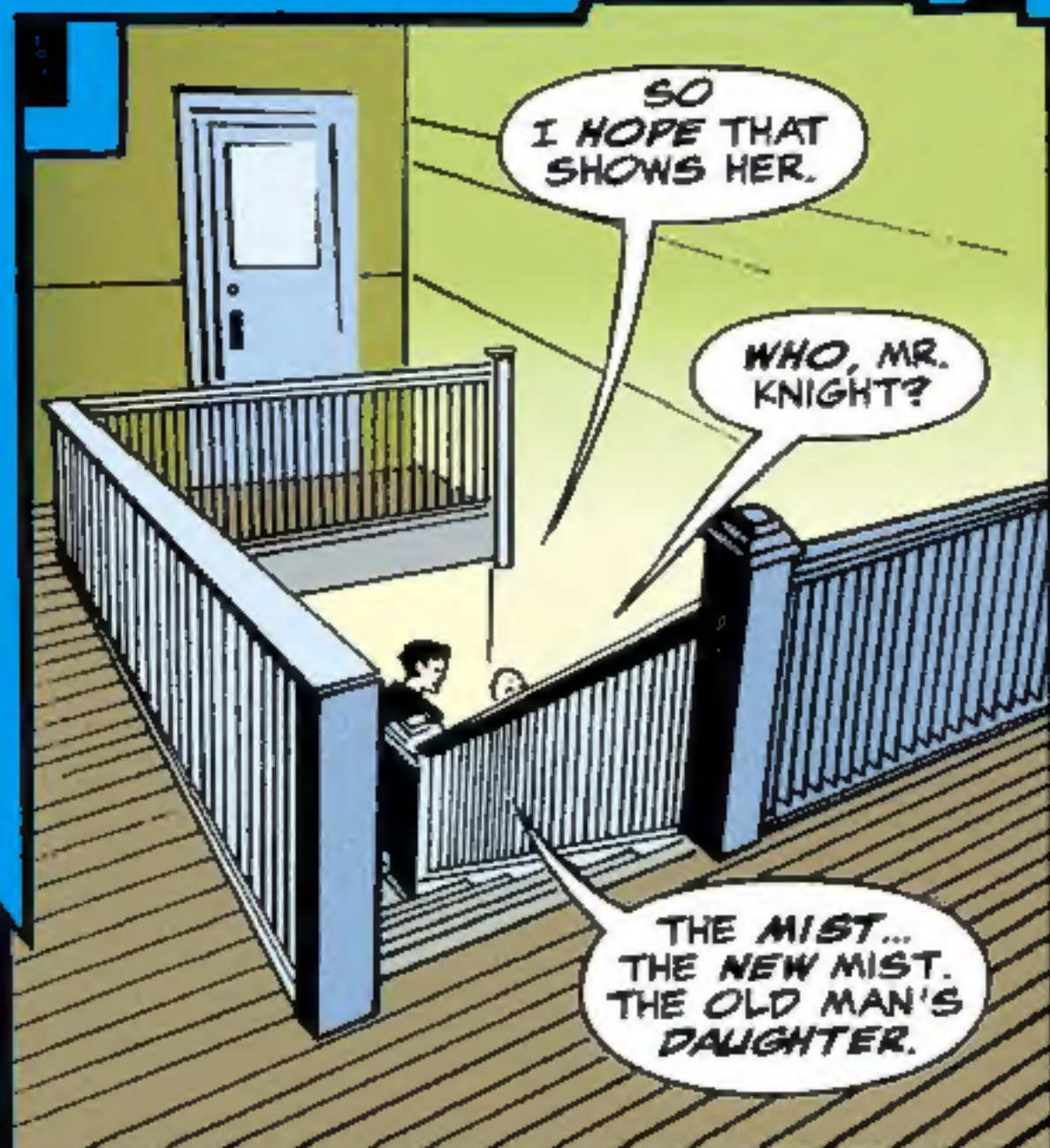
...I SNAPPED. I GRABBED MY GUN AND CHARGED OVER THE TOP ON MY OWN.

THE SIGHT OF THIS MOBILIZED THE MEN ON MY SIDE. THEY CAME OVER THE TOP FOLLOWING ME. WE TOOK THE TRENCH TOGETHER.

MY ACTIONS WERE NOTED. I WAS AWARDED. AWARDED...





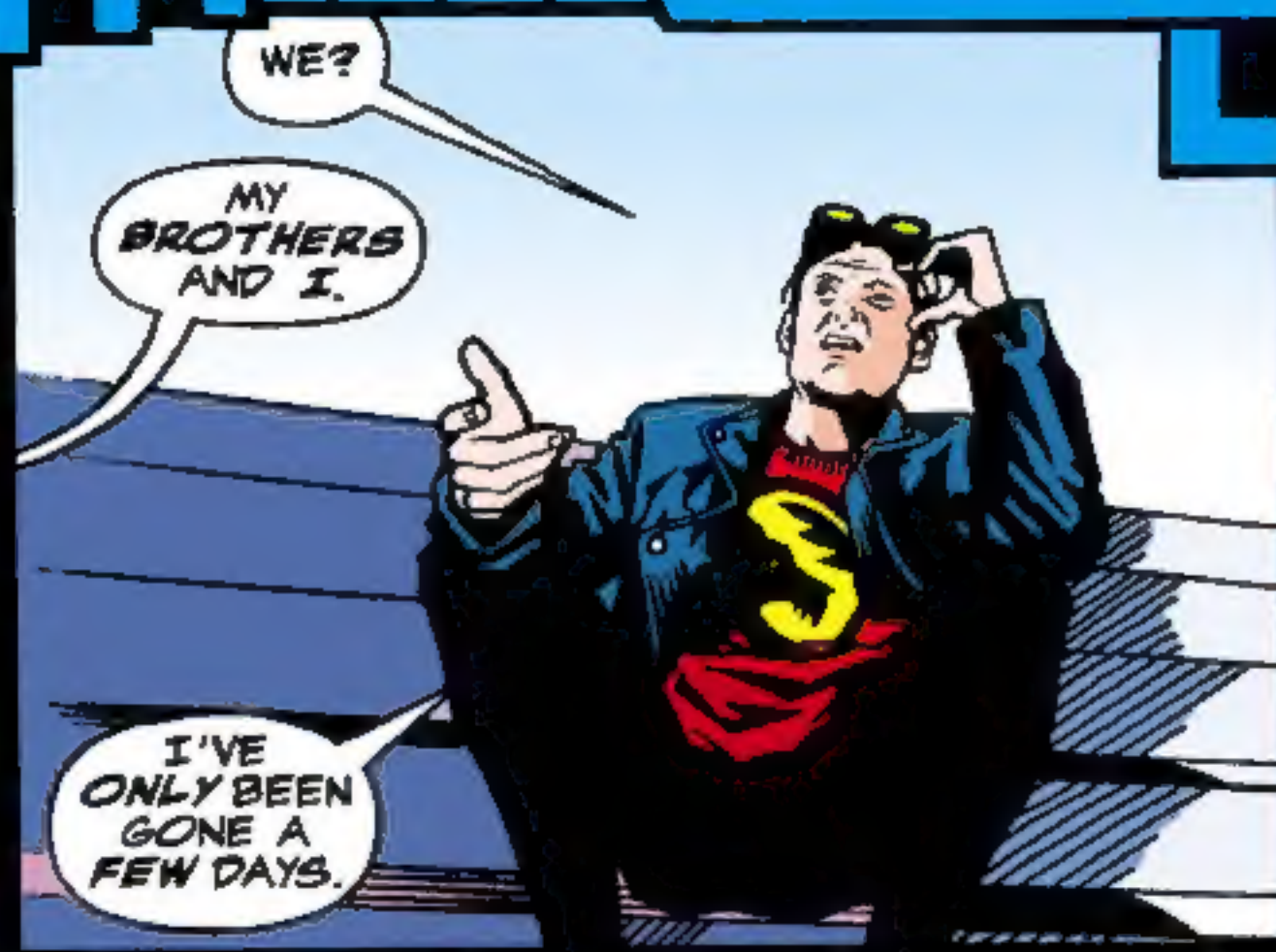




WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?

AWAY.

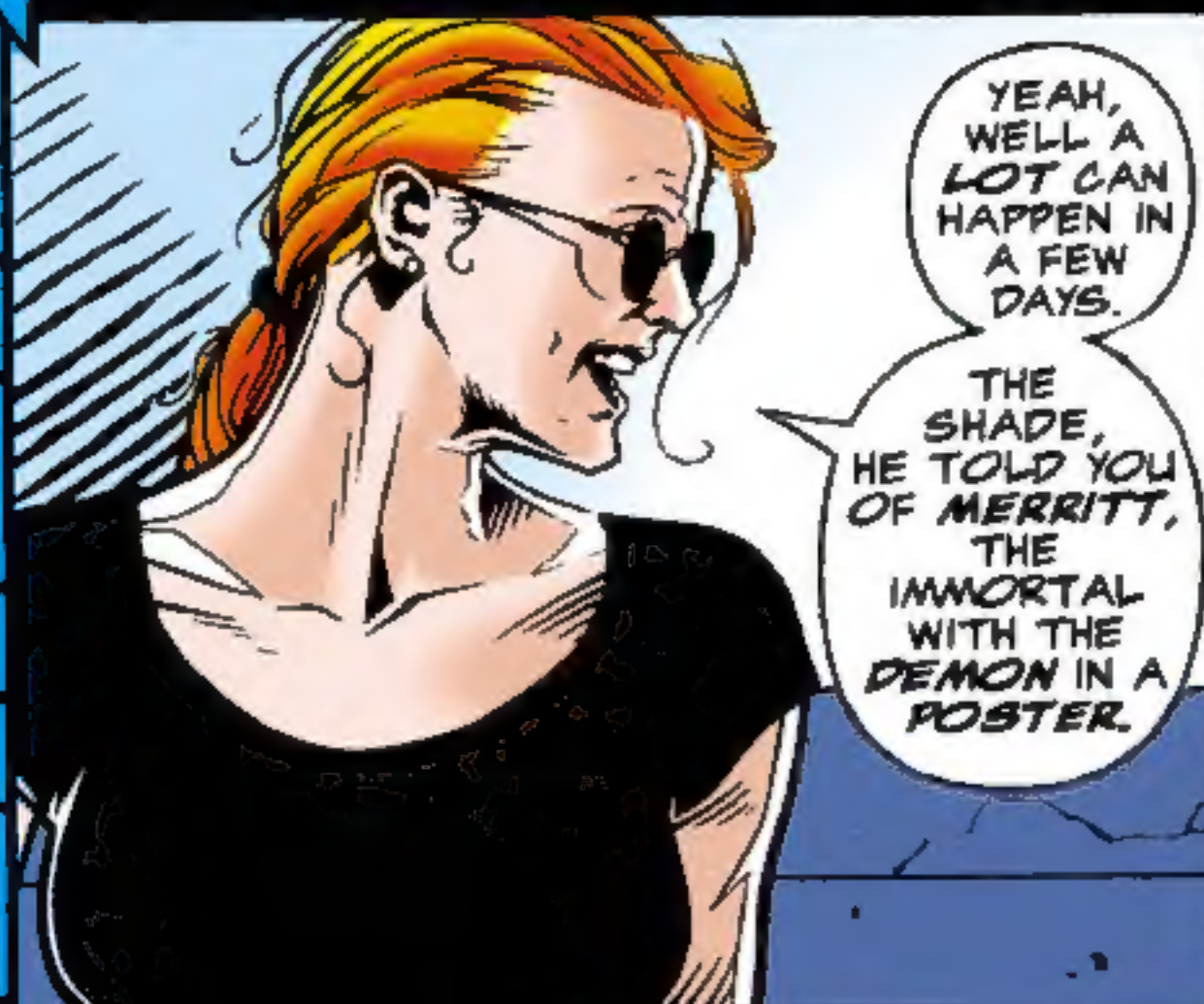
I KNOW. WE'VE BEEN LOOKING ALL OVER FOR YOU.



WE?

MY BROTHERS AND I.

I'VE ONLY BEEN GONE A FEW DAYS.



YEAH, WELL A LOT CAN HAPPEN IN A FEW DAYS.

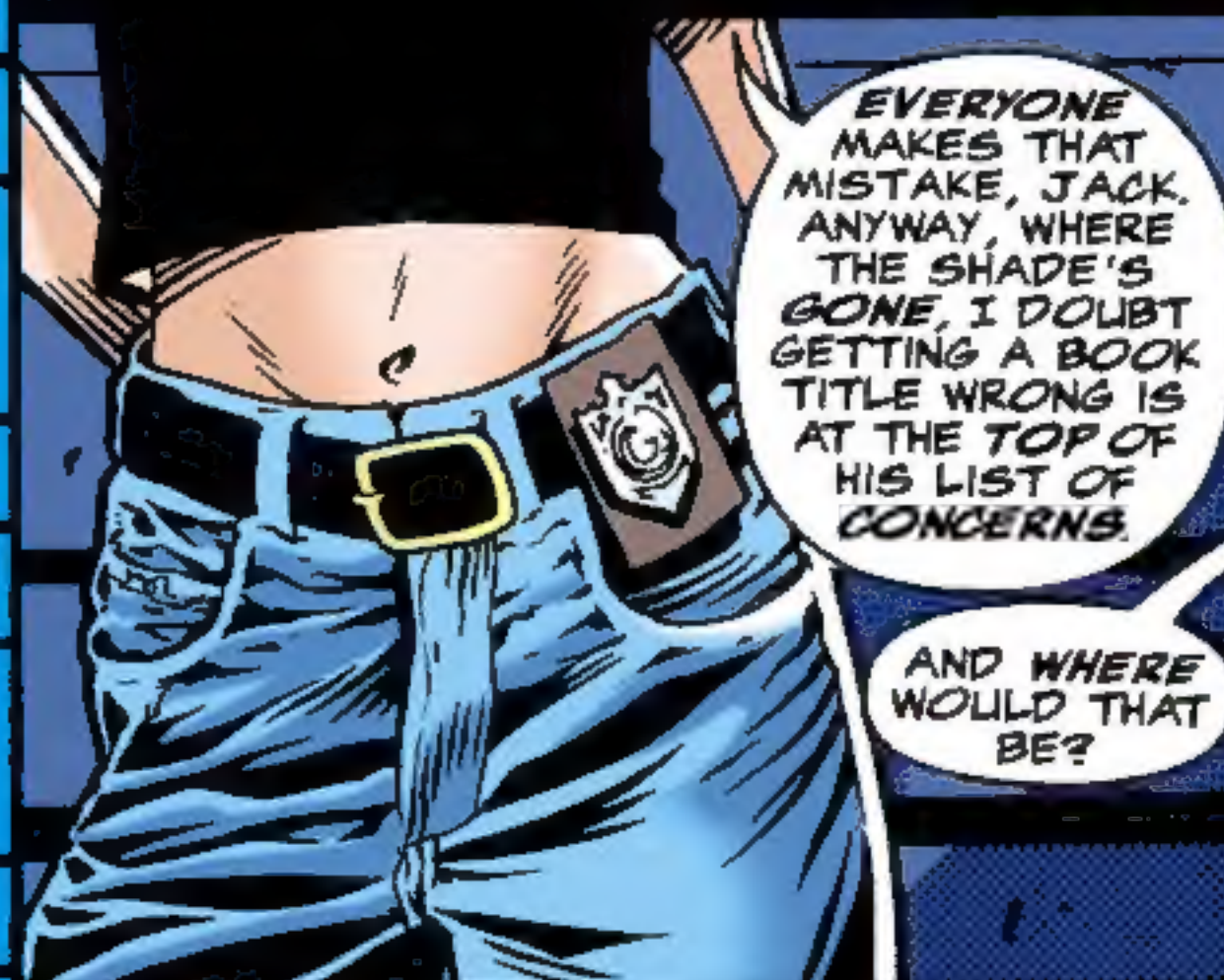
THE SHADE, HE TOLD YOU OF MERRITT, THE IMMORTAL WITH THE DEMON IN A POSTER.



YEAH, WILDE BASED HIS BOOK, THE PORTRAIT OF DORIAN GREY, ON HIM.

EXCEPT YOU KNOW, I REALIZED LATER ON, IT'S NOT THE "PORTRAIT"...IT'S THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GREY.

I'M SURPRISED THE SHADE MADE THAT MISTAKE.



EVERYONE MAKES THAT MISTAKE, JACK. ANYWAY, WHERE THE SHADE'S GONE, I DOUBT GETTING A BOOK TITLE WRONG IS AT THE TOP OF HIS LIST OF CONCERNS.

AND WHERE WOULD THAT BE?



INTO THE POSTER.

MY BROTHER'S BEEN DRAGGED THERE TOO.



WHICH BROTHER?

MATT.

MUSTACHE AND CIGARETTES, HUH?



WELL, IT LOOKS LIKE WE HAVE A PROBLEM.

Merritt has been an interesting footnote to many of my writings. Our paths have never crossed so there is nothing I could write in the first hand. Nothing definite and overriding.



But I enjoy stories.

And when talking with travelers and adventurers, sailors and spice merchants, I have sometimes heard of Merritt. Rarely, and with some tellings vague in smoke and rumor, but enough that have been able to cobble together the odd passage.

I suppose I do this as a way of distilling my thoughts about the man. An immortal like myself.

Merritt's youth at Oxford was typical for the first year, 1877. He was scholarly. Quiet. Oscar Wilde, upon meeting him there, on one of the few times he had cause to, found Merritt humorless. "Like winter in a seaside town," Wilde said years later when I broached the subject.

Oxford could be anything for anyone, especially in those years. Wilde certainly took bold strides in creating the man he would go on to be.

Merritt, however, seemed content to bury himself away in books and shun the societies, revues and sporting events that lure the normal student away from the library.

There is a breed of British academic. Gray, one and all, for the color of experience has never shone upon them. They know from study. They do not know from life.

Merritt would, it seems, have quite happily become such a fellow had he not become intrigued by the occult.

His fascination with matters arcane was his salvation...as would it be the damnation of many he would encounter in the times ahead.



SAM WU
OFFICIALLY BECOMES
COMMISSIONER AT THE END
OF THE WEEK. I BEGIN AS
POLICE LIAISON TO YOU AND
ANY OTHER SUPERHEROES WHO
MAY COME TO TOWN.

I HAVE
TO SAY, THE
PROMOTION WAS A
SHOCK. CAME
COMPLETELY OUT
OF THE BLUE.

OF
COURSE THE
SHINE LOST ITS
LUSTER A LITTLE
WHEN MY FAMILY
TOLD ME WHAT A
MESS THEY'D
GOTTEN
THEMSELVES
INTO.



JUST LIKE WHEN WE WAS
KIDS. I WAS THE OLDEST. BY
SEVEN YEARS. MATT SECOND, AND
THEN THE REST WERE ALL PRETTY
CLOSE TOGETHER
AGE-WISE.

MATT WOULD
GO ON AND GET INTO
TROUBLE AND THE REST
OF THEM WOULD
FOLLOW HIS LEAD

LIKE
SHEEP.



CLARENCE,
I DON'T THINK THIS
IS THE TIME. AND
I'M SURE JACK
DOESN'T WANT TO
HEAR--

NO
NO. I
DO.

THEY'D GET
INTO THEIR MESS,
AND THEN ALL COME
TO ME WITH SHEEPISH
FACES WANTING ME TO
PUT THE FIRE OUT
UNDER WHATEVER STEW
THEY WERE SITTING
IN.

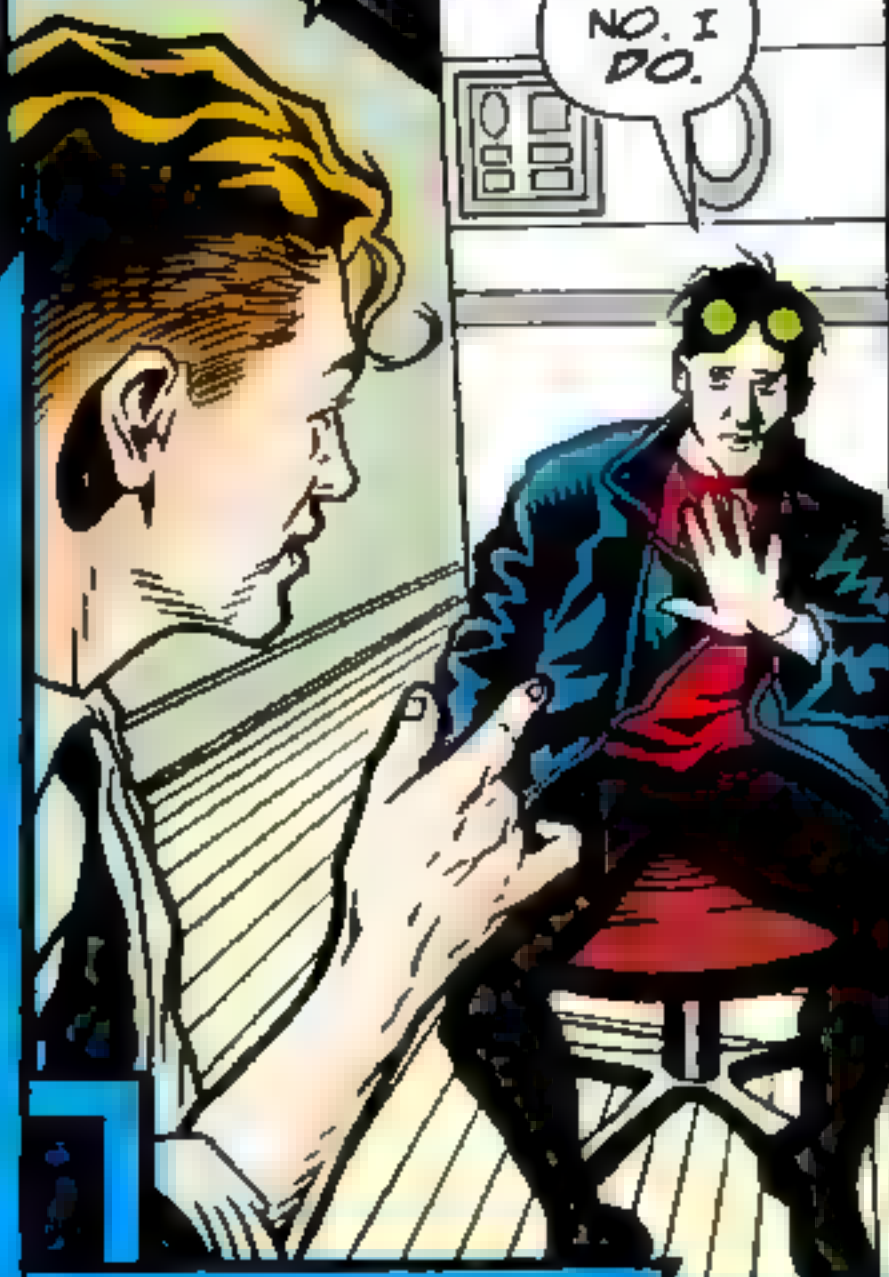
WELL, IT
SEEMS TO ME
THIS STEW'S
FIRE CAN ONLY
BE DOUSED IN
ONE WAY.

YEAH?

FIND
MERRITT.

HE WON'T
HAVE LEFT TOWN.
WE HAVE THE
POSTER UNDER
SPECIAL GUARD AT
CLARENCE'S
PRECINCT.

SO, MERRITT'S
OUT THERE.
SOMEWHERE IN OPAL.
WE JUST HAVE TO
START LOOKING.



I have yet to learn the name of the demon Merritt summoned on that foggy evening in 1879. I know that demons do have names and ranks and stations within Hell's many levels.

I'm sure this demon has all of the above. I'm sure he's a perfectly nice demon too. As demons go.

But demons from Hell and elsewhere, are all of them devilishly good (excuse the pun) at submitting temptation in such a menu as to seem the fools themselves.

They seem the guillible ones to offer something as great as whatever it is they bid, in exchange for something so slight as that thing they desire.

So it was with Merritt. Immortality in exchange for custodianship. Everlasting life in exchange for a poster.

And there was more to benefit Merritt in the demon's offer. At least Merritt saw it so and that his agreement was something of a bargain. It seems he knew the young man he was, and the old man he would doubtless become. A gray scholar.

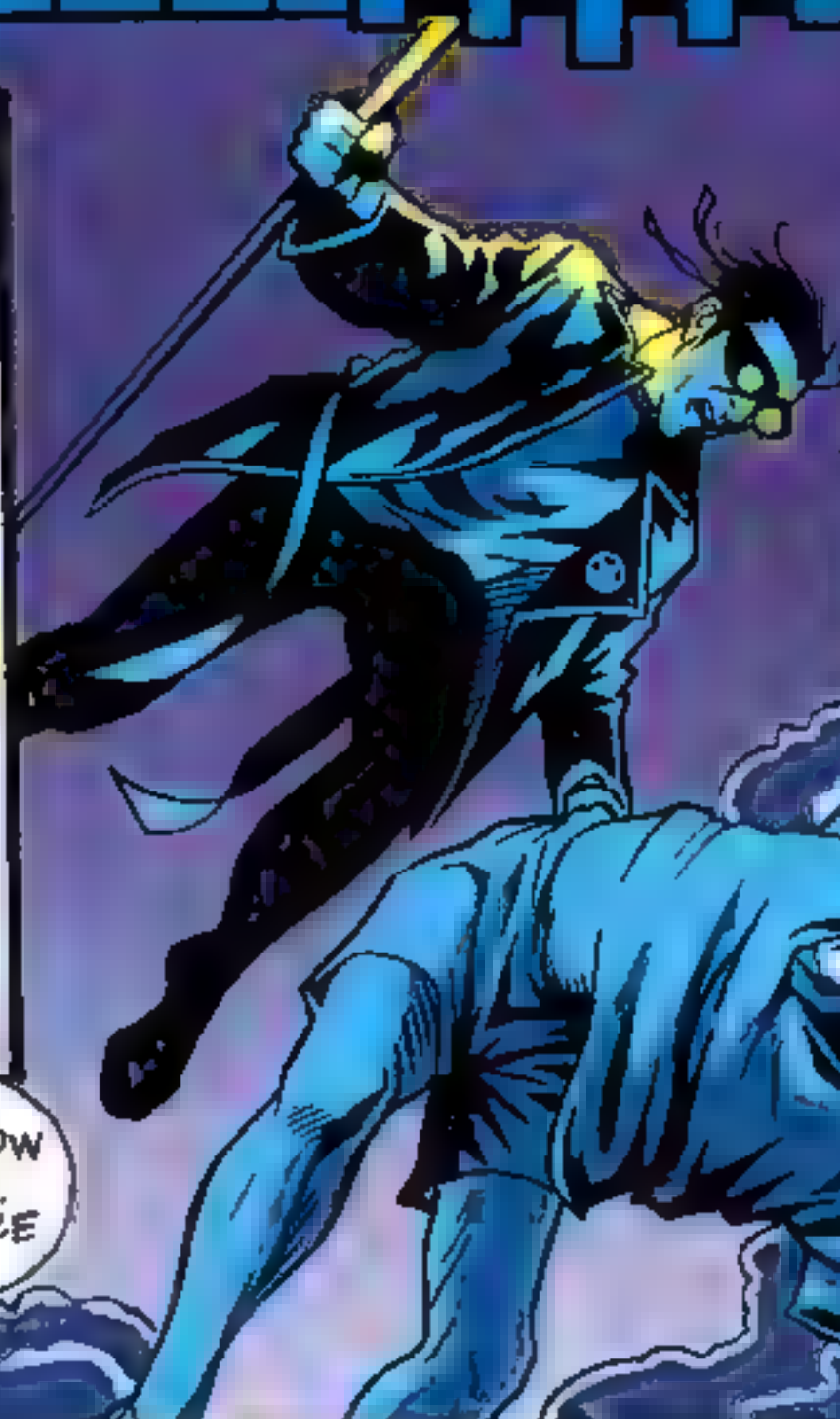
There was a part of him that knew a world was sweeter for the living in it. Now, with a demon who required souls, and would have a variety of them, Merritt knew he would have to lock his timidity away in a cabin trunk and venture forth to procure.

A month into his new life everlasting, and Merritt wondered how he could have thought Oxford...nay, the whole of England's green and pleasant lands, could ever have been his be-all and end-all.





COME ON, ERNIE. YOU KNOW EVERYTHING... THAT ISN'T NICE TO KNOW.



SO WHY ARE YOU SO TIGHT-LIPPED ABOUT MERRITT? WHERE IS HE? GIVE HIM UP.



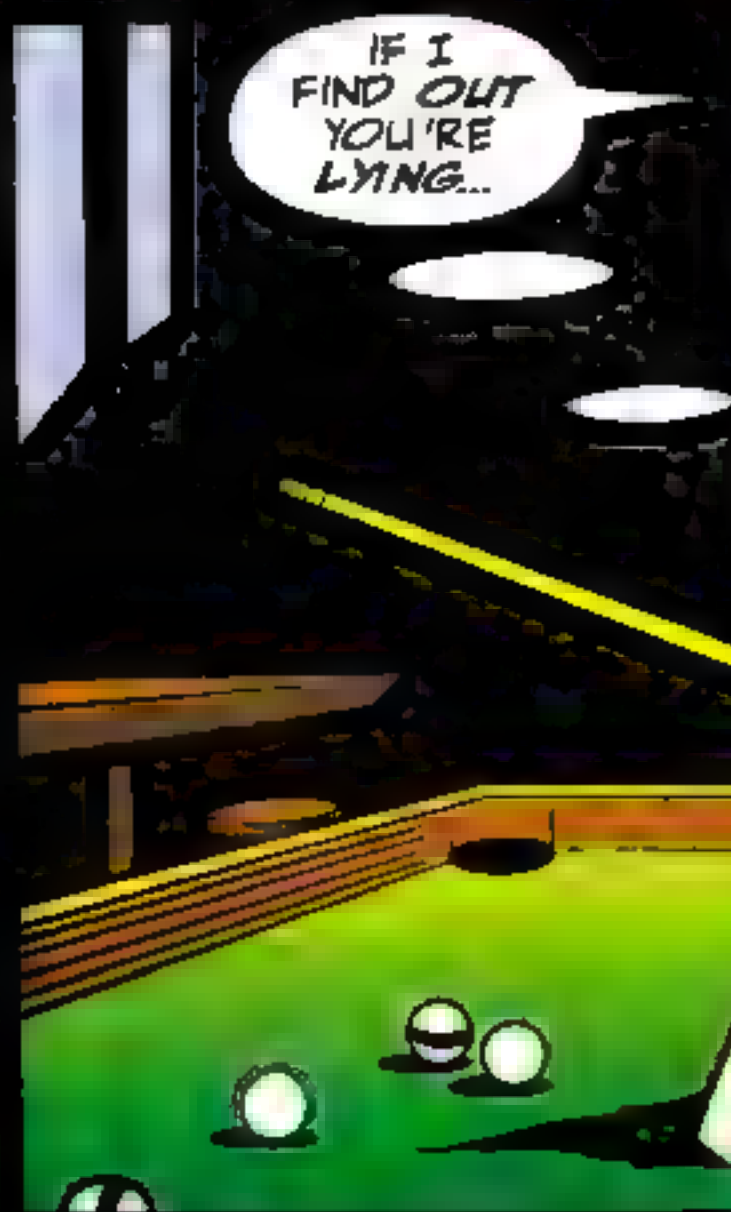
I DON'T KNOW. OH...OH...I...I'D TELL YOU IF I KNEW. AT THIS MOMENT I'D TELL YOU ANYTHING YOU WANTED TO HEAR.



COME ON! WHERE'S MERRITT?

YOU WERE THE ONE OUT OF HIS GANG WHO WASN'T KILLED AND DIDN'T ESCAPE WHEN WE HIT MERRITT'S HIDEOUT. THE ONLY ONE. SO YOU'LL CARRY ALL THE BLAME FOR MERRITT'S CRIMES IF YOU DON'T GIVE HIM UP.

YOU WANT TO HANG FOR ANOTHER MAN'S KILLINGS? WHERE'S MERRITT?



IF I FIND OUT YOU'RE LYING...

--IF I FIND OUT YOU DO KNOW WHERE MERRITT'S STASHED, WHAT I'M DOING NOW WILL BE INSIGNIFICANT...

...COMPARED WITH WHAT I'LL DO THEN!

Morriss sailed the high seas. He advised potentates. He started revolutions and uprisings. He ended one or two. He spied for the Dutch during the Boer War, and for the Turks in the Great War. He found gold in the Klondike and lost it on Wall Street. There is a street named after him in a suburb of Australia where he spent several relaxing years as a local politician, before boredom dragged him back to the world and five years with a rag tag theater troupe touring India and the East. He almost lost his manhood to Afghani tribesmen, but instead he stayed with the men for six months and in that time took a wife. In 1953 he exhibited paintings in a Belgian gallery. In 1919 he sold guns to the Black and Tans for a while, until things seemed fraught...at which point he happily switched sides and sold guns to Collins. The links to Ireland afforded him a whisky supplier when peace arrived. This whisky he transported to New York and Boston during prohibition. He spent 1891 as a riverboat gambler and 1931 flying mail planes in the Andes.

(It was there he learned the root of his magic. The root of the poster's power stemmed from love first gleaned in those remote mountains. Etching a gateway to other levels of existence...to Hell and to Heaven...onto a flat portable plane. Few had managed to learn this skill, though tales of another who did such a thing upon a Hawaiian Shirt still flutter to my ears now and once a few.)

I have to say, his life many lifetimes long would have been one to envy. He was and is, quite possibly, the greatest adventurer of all.

If he didn't have that annoying habit of putting his poster on a wall and having the demon emerge from it to devour some passing innocent, I'd admire him slightly more so.





"DID YOU GET
BANGED UP
MUCH?"

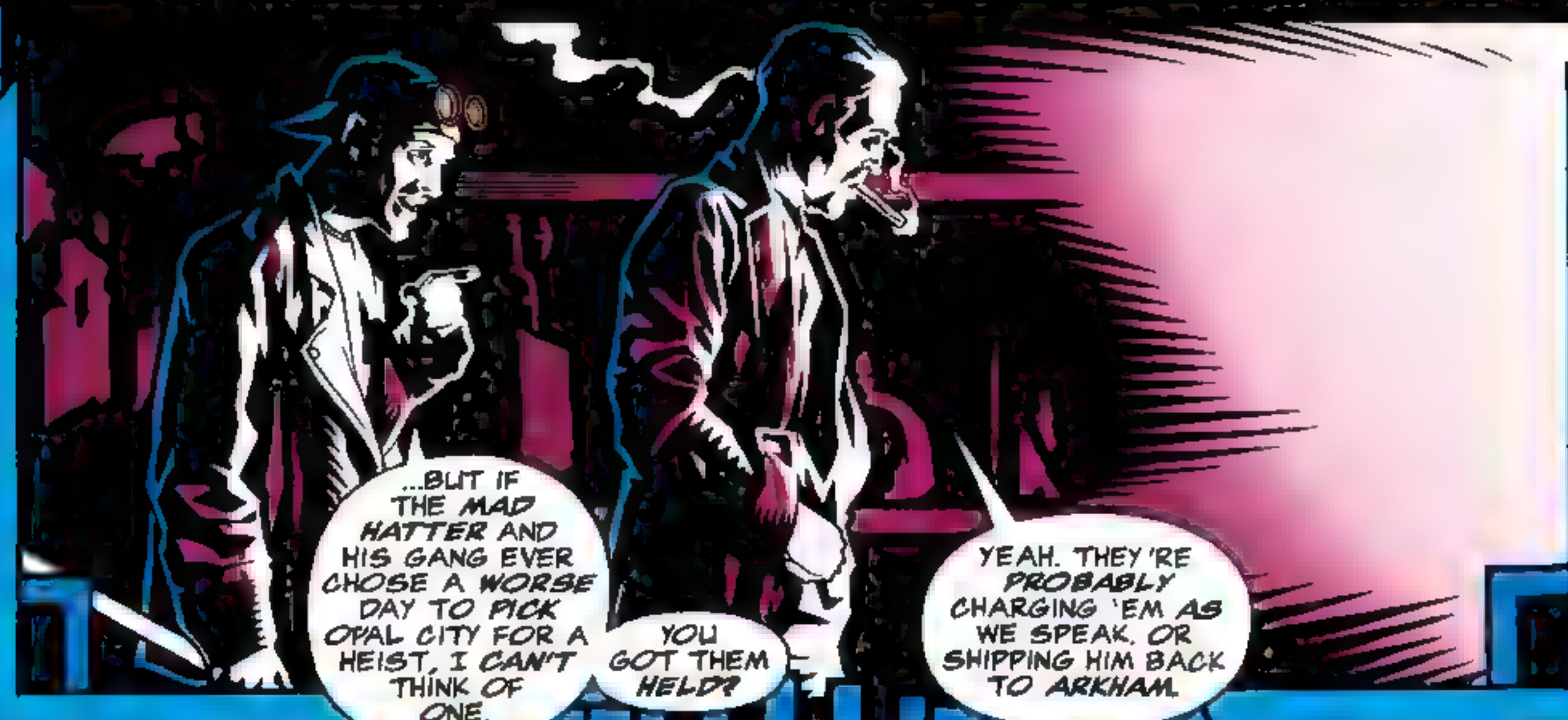
"NO..."

"...NOT MUCH."



"A FEW
CUTS."

"I GAVE
MORE THAN
I GOT..."



"...BUT IF
THE MAD
HATTER AND
HIS GANG EVER
CHOSE A WORSE
DAY TO PICK
OPAL CITY FOR A
HEIST, I CAN'T
THINK OF
ONE."

"YOU
GOT THEM
HELD?"

"YEAH. THEY'RE
PROBABLY
CHARGING 'EM AS
WE SPEAK. OR
SHIPPING HIM BACK
TO ARKHAM."

SO THIS
IS THE
POSTER?

YEAH.
ROGER DEAN
HAS NOTHING TO
WORRY ABOUT,
HUH?

THAT'S
AN ODD
REFERENCE.

I'M ODDER
THAN I LOOK.
NOT MUCH, TO BE
TRUE, BUT A BIT.
THE SUIT AND
STIFF BACK COME
WITH BEING THE
OLDEST SON.

YOU
KNOW, YOU
REMIND ME OF
MY BROTHER.
JUST A
LITTLE. IN THE
WAY YOU
STAND, AND
THE PAUSES
YOU TAKE
BETWEEN
WORDS.

YOU
KNOW WHAT
I'M
THINKING.

WE'RE
HUNTING FOR
MERRITT.

BUT WE
NEED TO GET
MERRITT HUNTING
FOR US. WE BAIT
OUR HOOK WITH
THE POSTER.
HANG IT OUT
THERE--

AND MERRITT
WILL COME.



In 1926 Merritt and his deeds came to the attention of one investigator. An Englishman. Hamilton Drew. Like the heroes of Doyle and Rohmer, he was a true, blue gentleman adventurer. Bright and intelligent, but with a laden spirit. The way England can beat down their finest before they've flown. So it was with this fellow.

Drew and his assistant Ben Luddy pursued Merritt through many exploits in the late 1920's. They once encountered Merritt's demon and other horrors in the bandit dens of Mongolia.

Another time Luddy was snared by Merritt, forcing Drew to lead a Cossack charge across the snowy Siberian wastes to save his friend.

And of course there was the incident in Crata.

But let it not be thought that Merritt is a great criminal mind. No empire of infamy is his, with a bizarre coterie of agents and killers at his beck and call. Merritt is a villain, ay, but his main talent is his elusiveness.

He can escape. Always. He was one step ahead of Drew every time. He's been one step ahead of everyone who ever tried to catch or kill him.

SO, YOU'VE PUT
A GUARD ON
THE POSTER?

EIGHT MEN IN FOUR
SHIFTS. THEY'LL STAY
FRESH THAT WAY. IN
CASE THINGS GET
HEAVY OR WEIRD.

NOW, INSTEAD OF
PUTTING OUT WORD ON
MERRITT, WE HAVE TO
START PUTTING OUT
WORD ON THE
POSTER...THAT WE HAVE
IT. SO THE NEWS
GETS TO HIM.

THE POSTER'S GOING TO
BE TRANSPORTED TO
S.T.A.R. LABORATORIES IN
METROPOLIS FOR TESTS.
IT WILL ONLY BE IN OPAL
CITY FOR THREE MORE
DAYS.

HELLO.

JACK,
IT'S
CHARITY.

YOU'RE
HUNTING A
MAN CALLED
MERRITT?

NONE
OF THAT'S
TRUE, BUT
HE WON'T
KNOW. HE'LL
COME.

JACK.
PHONE.

ERR...
HOW DID YOU
KNOW?

THE SAME WAY I KNOW
OTHER THINGS. I'VE BEEN
GETTING FLASHES.
VISIONS. I SEE YOU AND
HIM FIGHTING. I SEE A
DEMON...YOU AND A MAN
IN BLACK BATTLING A
DEMON. AND...

...UM...I SEE
MERRITT COMING
FOR ME. I SEE HIM
KILLING ME. I DON'T
KNOW WHY. WHAT...HOW I
MIGHT BE A THREAT TO
HIM. BUT I SEE MY
OWN DEATH.

I'M
SCARED,
JACK.

CLARENCE, I NEED YOU
TO SEND SOMEONE OVER
TO A FRIEND OF MINE.
SHE'LL BE IN DANGER IF
WE DON'T ACT RIGHT
AWAY. IT'S COMPLICATED.
I CAN'T EXPLAIN IT
ALL NOW.

YOU
DON'T NEED
TO, JACK.

MASON,
CAN YOU DO
IT?

The last two reports I got on Merritt were twenty years after Luddy had been committed to the asylum and Drew had been dragged to Hell through the poster. The poster had been snatching from a street in Chicago. American investigator Johnny Peril got involved. He and the demon skirmished. Peril survived. The demon vanished. Peril never made the link from the demon to the poster it emerged from. Merritt stole away that night to a new venue for his game. And Peril declared himself a victor, for what in reality was at best a stalemate.

And then later still, in Gotham City, the demon fought one of his own kind. Another stalemate. Although this a fierier one.

That was my last word on Merritt. My last.

Until today. A policeman taken. No signs. No clues. Nothing overt.

And yet I know. I know. I know.

Merritt is in Opal!



THIS IS A
MAGICAL
TIME.

IN
OPAL.

WHEN JACK POLISHES
THE ARMOR OF HIS
SPIRIT FOR A JOUST
WITH THE UNKNOWN
THAT HE KNOWS WILL
SURELY COME.

BUT IN OTHER
WAYS TOO IT'S A
MAGICAL TIME IN
THE CITY.

SOMETHING. THE
TEXTURE OF THE
AIR. THE SINGING
OF TREES. THE
WHISPER OF
ANCIENT GRANITE.
THE BIRDS HAVE A
LIGHT. THE RIVER
BRUSHES ITS HAIR.
THE CITY HALL
SIGHS LIKE A
MOTHER CONTENT
TO SEE HER SONS
AND DAUGHTERS
FARE SO WELL.

WHEN A MASTER OF
DARK AND A SHERIFF
TWICE BORN FACE THE
FIERY PITS OR ICY
VAULTS OF HELL (OR
WHATEVER FATE MAY
INDEED BE THEIRS).

ALL OF THIS AND
MORE. IT'S THERE,
IF YOU KNOW HOW
TO LOOK.

MASON O'DARE HASN'T
SPOKEN A WORD ALL DAY.
OTHERS...HIS BRETHREN...JACK...
ARE SO QUICK TO TALK,
THERE'S BEEN LITTLE NEED
FOR HIM TO UTTER EVEN A
SYLLABLE.

HE WORRIES FOR
HIS MISSING
BROTHER. HIS
HEART IS DARK

HIS
MANNER
COLD.

AH, COME
IN. I'VE BEEN
WAITING FOR
YOU. I'VE
PACKED A
BAG.

BUT THEN HIS
EYES MEET
ANOTHER'S.

AND HE HEARS
HIS OWN VOICE
BEFORE HE
REALIZES IT.



HELLO,
I'M
MASON

I'M
CHARITY.



AND THE MAGIC
IS UPON HIM.

To Be Continued.

Deadman Wade

"THIS IS WHAT
AWESOME
LOOKS LIKE".

DCP